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ABSTRACT

Writing proficiency is an important skill that can help teachers communicate what they know to colleagues, teacher educators, and researchers. The effectiveness of the writing across the curriculum movement supports development and implementation of a writing program in undergraduate teacher education. The Advanced Writing Proficiency (AWP) Program at Saint Mary's College (Indiana) requires students to demonstrate competency in "writing appropriate to the profession." Students submit three types of papers for review: experiential, analytical, and professional. They may submit: (1) an article critique; (2) a book review; (3) an analytic essay involving comparison/contrast, argument, or synthesis of ideas; (4) a research paper; (5) an annotated bibliography; or (6) an expository paper describing a product created for a curriculum area. Evaluation consists of a portfolio review process. The writing program at Saint Mary's has three elements: a writing center that offers support for students working on the AWP requirement, faculty development workshops, and curricular changes. (IAH)

Writing Across the Curriculum: Creating A Professional Writing Sequence for A Teacher Education Program

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The voice of the practitioner (the classroom teacher) has limited representation in the literature of education. Researchers have not perceived teachers as people who possess a unique body of professional knowledge and expertise. Elbaz (1983) and Lampert (1981; 1984) are two researchers who have attempted to describe and analyze what teachers know. Strategies used to gather information about teachers' knowledge include getting them to talk about their work in interviews, during teacher seminars, or discussions of observations and classroom videotapes. Because teachers must deal with specific situations, their descriptions about what they know sound more like stories full of particulars of experience than theories. Using the case study approach with one subject, a high school English teacher, Elbaz (1983) suggested four categories of practical knowledge in teaching-- knowledge of self, teaching, subject matter and curriculum development. Teacher educators have many examples of experiences with cooperating teachers that reinforce and support Elbaz' four category designation of practical knowledge. Cooperating teachers can, and often do, respond at length upon a variety of subjects. Fo_ example, why they (personally) do not care for assertiveness discipline, small group methods that are not highly structured, a

new basal reading series that introduces all of the consonants before any vowels, or the emphasis now on "writing across the content lines." Their talk ranges up and down the language ladder of abstraction and often a listener will think--"This person really knows." "This person will have a great impact on the student teacher." "I wish I could get what she knows recorded to help my next group of students."

Lampert (1981; 1984) combines Elbaz' (1983) personal knowledge with knowledge of students and concludes that the teacher's vision of a child is based on what she cares about as well as what she knows about the child. Lampert (1981; 1984) believes that personal knowledge is essential in accomplishing what teachers care about, what students want and what the curriculum requires. For an illustration of Lampert's claim, recall the cooperating teacher who has said: "No. No, that will not work with this group." And, while pursuing the reasons for this response, the teacher educator frequently gives a critical analysis of the group she is talking about--a group uncomfortable with competition, supportive and vocal in their praise of one another, resistant to change and/or disruption of their daily schedule.

The connection between Elbaz' and Lampert's research is found in the recognition that teachers' knowledge is actively connected to the reality of the classroom and that it functions to resolve tensions, manage dilemmas and simplify the complexities of their work.

Elbaz' (1983) conclusions about how teachers' knowledge is

organized has particular relevance to introducing the idea that developing abilities to write professionally in undergraduate teacher education programs will result in a voice for teachers' knowledge. If we have had experiences with teachers' knowledge in the field, then we know what they know needs to be documented so it can be used by other teachers or teachers in training.

Elbaz (1983) identifies three levels of application used in teachers' knowledge: rules of practice, practical principles and images. A rule of practice is a statement about what will be done in a particular situation or is an action taken where there is an assumption that the purpose is known and taken for granted. A practical principle is broader and more inclusive and requires a rationale and reflection. The most interesting and the last application, images, seems to be closely related to the purposes of writing in a teacher education program.

Images, according to Elbaz (1983), mediate between thought and action and show how different kinds of knowledge and values come together in teaching. Images guide teachers intuitively and extend knowledge by generating new rules and practical principles. Records of teachers' images would prevent a great deal of wasted time and repetition of unsuccessful teaching behaviors.

Because of teachers' positions in the school hierarchy their personal knowledge often carries less authority than more objective data. However when teachers learn to record their knowledge they will advance the understanding of teaching and support the image of the teacher as someone who holds and uses knowledge to shape the

work situation and guide practice. To communicate what the teacher knows, teacher education programs need to provide a forum for the development of the teachers' voice. What better way is there to develop a voice than through its transcription into print?

The writing across the curriculum movement provides additional support for developing and implementing a writing program in an undergraduate teacher education program. Donald Gray (1988) reviews two arguments in support of writing across the college curriculum. First, writing should be a means of instruction in almost every subject in the curriculum Students are not fluent, confident and effective writers after one first-year course in composition. This is definitely true for students entering teacher education programs. A large amount of time is devoted, by many teacher educators, to emphasizing the importance of clear and precise written communication. Usually the instruction is done in relation to parent-teacher communication but it is also done in conjunction with the student being a future teacher of writing to children. In this instance the focus becomes the necessity of the teacher being competent as a writer in order to teach others how to write. Writing is too important to be left solely to the college core curriculum or freshman programs of study.

Secondly, writing is a way of learning. This claim is based on the interrelationships between the process of writing and thinking. Writing is recursive and moves with deliberate pace. It makes a record that can be returned to, refined and its parts connected. Continual revisions make writing seem to be, not the

residue of thinking, but a transcription of the act itself. Writing is a record of the mind in the art of knowing.

Several years ago cooperating teachers at Monroe Elementary School in the South Bend School Corporation were asked to engage in a written dialogue with a college supervisor from Saint Mary's College. The dialogue took the form of a journal/notebook kept by the cooperating teachers of their professional interactions with student teachers. In the beginning stages of the journal /notebook writing the entries were very brief and general in content, but as the student teaching experience continued, a change began to occur in the writing. Entries were long, focused on the teachers' communication with the student, and provided explanations and insights about development as a teacher. Cooperating teachers showed pride in their journal/notebook and asked for written responses from the college supervisor and the student teacher. The effect of the dialogue generated a request to share what had happened with other cooperating teachers and a meeting of the cooperating teachers was set aside for this purpose. Writing functioned well in this instance as a means for gathering information about teachers' knowledge and as a vehicle for conveying this knowledge with pride.

The current idea of writing across the curriculum is only about twenty years old. Originally the idea was that writing across the curriculum would take place in courses taught by people who were not specialists in rhetoric or writing instruction. Saint Mary's College writing across the curriculum program is about

eighteen years old. In the last four years the college writing across the curriculum program has developed in each major, including the teacher education program at the college. Professional programs have been among the last disciplines to adopt the ideas of writing across the curriculum.

In March of 1984 the Director of the Writing Clinic and the Writing Proficiency Program at Saint Mary's College met with the members of the Department of Education to consider the Advanced Writing Proficiency (AWP) Program. The meeting included a discussion of the following questions: Why should there be a second level writing requirement? How would we define AWP? What means might we employ for evaluation? A committee of three faculty members was appointed to develop an Advanced Writing Proficiency (AWP) proposal.

Some members of the department were less than enthusiastic about taking on what seemed to be a "burden" and questioned their expertise as teachers of writing. The committee's proposal, however, was accepted. The department agreed to support the AWP for several reasons: (1) the need to ensure that elementary education majors are appropriate role models in the classroom as they teach young people the standards of basic English, literature, speech and writing; (2) the need as professional educators in the discipline of elementary education to prepare scholarly proposals and papers related to their work and to make formal presentations of this work at committee and board meetings, at state and national conferences; and (3) the need elementary education majors have to

continue to develop their skills in written expression during graduate training either immediately after graduation or within a few years.

The AWP was defined as "writing appropriate to the profession" and three areas were identified as "appropriate." (1) ability to demonstrate standard forms of composition, e.g., the paragraph, the essay, the expository, descriptive and narrative composition and creative writing; (2) ability to prepare professional documents, e.g., the observational report, the curriculum report, unit or guide, and the parent report; (3) ability to practice skills in scholarly writing for future application, e.g., the literature review of research, the historical research report, the empirical research study, and the ethnographic research report.

A portfolio review process was developed for the evaluation of the AWP requirement. At specified times, during their junior and senior years, each student selects and submits five papers with at least one in each of the three areas. Students arrange conferences with professors during the semester to assist with the designated AWP assignments in particular courses. When students are satisfied with their papers, they place clean copies in the AWP portfolio. Portfolios are kept in the department office and are accessible only to the AWP Committee.

The AWP Committee is made up of three members who serve a two year term with the chairperson serving an overlapping term of one year. Having only one new member each year has contributed to the continuous development of the AWP process. Initially the committee

developed a portfolio card that indicated the status of each paper and its area. It soon became clear, however, that students needed more information about their papers and that the committee needed better records. Faculty developed a checklist to specify the types of errors students made on each paper. When a student received a letter indicating the status of her papers, she was also informed of the problems in the papers that had failed. The letter has recently been refined so that the status of the papers submitted and any problems are indicated in chart form. Students are also assigned an AWP advisor, a member of the AWP Committee, to assist them with their submissions.

After reading numerous student papers and talking with faculty members in other departments, as well as the education department, the AWP Committee developed a handbook which included major revisions to the AWP process. Beginning with the class of 1994, each elementary education major will complete one AWP submission in the first semester after admission to the department. In the junior year, the student will complete one AWP submission in the fall semester and one in the spring semester. At the present time, three papers rather than five are needed to meet the AWP requirement. The three areas have been eliminated and instead students submit three types of papers which demonstrate skills using a variety of written expression. Students may submit (1) an article critique, (2) a book review, (3) an analytic essay involving comparison/contrast, argument, or synthesis of ideas, (4) a research paper, (5) an annotated bibliography, and (6) an

expository paper describing a product created for an area of curriculum.

The present AWP process begins with a professor designating a writing assignment as one that can be utilized for the advanced writing portfolio. Students must then decide whether or not they want to pursue that assignment. If students choose to use an assignment, they obtain direction, assistance and critical feedback from the professor during the semester. The paper is eventually submitted to the portfolio on or before the due date.

In the meantime, the AWP Committee chair organizes the process for the review of the portfolios. The members of the AWP Committee read the portfolios and record the results for each submission. The AWP Committee chair is responsible for sending letters to the students indicating the status of the portfolios. After receiving the feedback about papers in the portfolios, the students analyze the evaluations and choose to make revisions or submit a different paper. Students are encouraged to arrange meetings with their AWP advisor for assistance with any questions concerning their portfolios.

Throughout the development of the AWP in the Department of Education, faculty have become more committed to the program. They have come to see themselves as teachers of writing within professional education. They have developed assignments and refined the focus on the various forms of written communication required of professional educators. Professors also serve as models for students as they work through assignments and assist

students with their portfolio submissions. A greater sense of the future is apparent as faculty prepare students to use written communication with parents and the school community as well as to write for publication in educational journals and textbooks.

A survey of writing across the curriculum programs, conducted by C. W. Griffin in 1984-1985, found that although individual programs can be unique and elaborate, there are a limited number of elements. These elements are writing centers, faculty workshops and curricula changes. All three elements are reflected in the Saint Mary's College Writing Program. The College Writing Center offers support for students working on both the college writing requirement and the advanced writing proficiency requirement in the major. Faculty workshops have been sponsored continuously by the Writing Program since its inception. The topics for the faculty workshops have been varied. The range of topics can be illustrated through their titles. These include (1) The Advanced W: Perspectives and Prospectives, (2) Finding Models, (3) Changing As A Writer, (4) Collage of Creative Assignments--Does Writing Have to Be Boring?, (5) The Perils of Self-Evaluation and (6) Reading, Writing and Refereeing. The Writing Program is extensively involved in the "linked" or "coregistered" courses which connect writing with another required course. Examples of this type of curricula change include Philosophy 110W, Communications 103W, Humanistic Studies 103W, Religious Studies 200W and Anthropology 141W.

The idea that writing will develop an understanding of and

appreciation for teachers' knowledge and eventually lead to a voice for the elementary education teacher can be found in the explication of assignments and examples of student writing from the teacher education program.

Writing assignments for the advanced writing proficiency requirement can be placed in three categories. These are experiential, analytic and professional. Writing that falls in the experiential category is typically done in lower level courses and is characterized by personal reflection, use of first person narrative, and reliance on experience as the source of information and authority. Papers are written for an immediate audience such as the author or the class instructor. Writing in the analytic category requires thinking that demands use of comparison and causation, personal judgement combined with objective application of experience, and use, for the first time, of the professional knowledge base as authority. The audience is other students, the course instructor, and, recently, the department newsletter. Professional writing utilizes critical and creative thinking, recognition of the connection between the knowledge base and personal experience, and the author's understanding that it is possible to speak as part of the authority that adds to the knowledge base. The audience for this writing is other professionals.

Assignments in the experiential category are found in Education 201L Teaching As A Profession, the first course in the teacher education program. This course is primarily a decision-

making course for students about the major. All faculty teach this course and the two most common assignments are the issue paper and the observation journal.

One instructor provides the title for the issue paper in that section. Students are encouraged to identify difficult teaching conditions during field observation. Students then read about strategies to deal with conditions they have observed. The paper is written in first person narrative and must incorporate their observation and developing perspective on the role(s) of a teacher.

The observation journal is kept by the student while in the field experience. The students, again, write in first person narrative directly to the course instructor as if involved in a conversation. The observation journal consists of entries related to the students' observations, reactions and reflection based on events occurring during the field placement. Observations are supposed to be descriptions of action by any person at the field site. Reactions are initial thoughts and feelings. Reflections are studied and thoughtful responses to both observations and reactions. This writing is viewed as a vehicle to develop personal perspective and philosophy, as a base for more complex writing.

Assignments in the analytic category include the observation/interview report, the observation/interview research paper, and the annotated bibliography. The observation/interview report is used in a course that is taken by students usually in the second semester of the sophomore year or the junior year. Students are asked to interview a classroom teacher about the reading

curriculum in the school. The students then construct a report based on the interview with the teacher and include information collected about the children, the classroom, and the lesson. The report concludes with a description that connects the information from the observation/interview and information from the course text and discussions in the course. This assignment introduces the writer to the professional knowledge base as a tool to use in guiding subjective observation.

The observation/interview research paper is offered in the first course of the kindergarten endorsement normally taken in the junior year. The instructor begins the assignment with discussions of types of preschool and characteristics of quality early childhood curricula. Students are asked to supplement class information with library research to refine this understanding of a topic. After students have completed this process, they conduct two observations at two different preschool sites. The observation/interview research paper requires students to incorporate all of the informational sources and to draw conclusions about the professional quality of the preschool they observed. This assignment requires use of the knowledge base to establish the authority of the writer.

The annotated bibliography is used in several junior level courses. This assignment is found in the third level course in the reading minor usually taken in the second semester of the junior year. The instructor gives the students two options for compilation of the annotated bibliography. Option number one asks

students to select one of the groups that is being studied in class and identify ten literature selections for kindergarten-primary, primary-intermediate and intermediate-junior high that reflect the culture and the contribution of the group to American culture and society. Students prepare a three to four sentence annotation for each selection , including a recommendation. Option number two asks students to select a grade level area, e.g. kindergarten-primary, primary-intermediate or intermediate-junior high school and identify ten literature selections for each of the groups being studied in the class. Students use the same three to four sentence format with the recommendation. Regardless of the option the students select, they write an introduction that provides an explanation of the annotated bibliography. This assignment requires the writer to integrate the knowledge of the group studied with the knowledge base acquired from reading education. Writers must weigh what they know about the group and reading education and make decisions about what would be relevant and appropriate. The writer practices the skills a professional educator uses to make choices.

Assignments in the professional category are found in upper level courses of the teacher education program. In Education 301 Curriculum I, for example, the instructor scheduled an entire class meeting for presentation and discussion of the topic. The class session began with the distribution of four articles from Arithmetic Teacher. The articles were chosen because they represented the four general education areas, e.g. theory,

methodology, instruction and instructional experiences. They also focused on mathematics in the elementary classroom. The students in the class had been studying curriculum and instruction in elementary mathematics. Utilizing an overhead projector and marking pens the instructor began with a series of questions prepared to lead the students to an understanding of how the writer developed the article. At the end of the discussion the class constructed an article skeleton to represent the writer's organizational framework. The class then divided into three small groups each with one of the remaining three articles and analyzed the article and created a skeleton for it. The instructor monitored each group and assisted when students had difficulty with the writer's structure. Each group presented an analysis to the class. At this point the instructor led the class through a summation of each writer's technique. After questions, the instructor distributed the actual writing assignment. The assignment asked the student to select one of the general education areas and a topic from their mathematics textbook. After selecting the area and topic the student writes a two-to-six page paper drawing upon the techniques used in the articles analyzed in class. The instructor provided two examples on the assignment sheet.

Gray (1988) summarized Odell's comments on a good writing assignment. A student should (1) receive clear directions, (2) work through an analysis, (3) distinguish relevant and irrelevant details and (4) learn to organize thinking. This assignment requires students to develop an exposition about a specific

application within an area of general education and to illustrate its use through examples from a content discipline. Students must interpret language, classify and frame their own ideas. The assignment also allows students to learn a great deal about writing. In particular, and most importantly, they learn how educators think and write.

The faculty of the department plan to track the development of writing in the three categories over next few years. As the assignments are refined and the categories either expand or are reduced, faculty will monitor the development of professional writing ability among students participating in the advanced writing proficiency requirement. Three years after each graduating class leaves the teacher education program, each student will receive a questionnaire asking about the kinds of writing they have been doing as professional educators. The survey will be sent again after five years. Survey results should support the hypothesis that the development of professional writing ability during the undergraduate teacher education program will affect the practitioner's ability to express teacher knowledge to others in a meaningful and valuable dialogue.

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